(d) would not such reduced investment in education sector impede realisation of the objectives envisaged *inter-alia* in the 'Sarva Siksha Abhiyan' programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. VALLABHBHAI RAMJIBHAI KATHIRIA): (a) to (d) The report titled 'Social Watch India', published jointly by Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar and National Centre for Advocacy Studies, Pune, has been perused. The Report *inter-alia,* mentions that in the budget for 2003-2004 'there is only a marginal increase in real per capita planned budgetary allocation in education. The education sector is given priority as borne out by the fact that the Centre Plan Outlay for eduction in X Plan is Rs. 43825 crore as compared to Rs. 24908.38 crore in the IX Plan, registering an increase of 75.94%. The Plan allocation for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Rs. 17,000 crore during X Plan with an annual Plan Outlay of Rs. 1951.25 crore during 2003-04.

Quality of Education

2155. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) how does Government rate the quality of higher/university education in the country;

(b) what steps have been taken by Government to improve the quality of higher/university education; and

(c) how far has Government succeeded?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. VALLABHBHAI RAMJIBHAI KATHIRIA): (a) to (c) Reforms in higher education are carried out as r continuous process. The objective of this process is to achieve a profound transformation of higher education in order that it becomes an effective promoter of sustainable human development commensurate with the specific requirements of the country and, at the same time, improve its relevance with closer links with the world of work and achieve quality in its teaching, research and business and community extensionfunctions to meet the challenges of 21st century. To fulfil its constitutional

responsibility for maintaining the standards in higher education, necessary regulations, directions and circulars, etc., in this regard are issued by the Central Government /UGC from time to time.

A major thrust is being given to improve the quality of education and research in the institutions of higher learning. The number of Universities and colleges/institutions which have been accredited by National Assessment and Acreditation Council is 94 and 429 respectively. UGC has identified five Universities as the "Universities with potential for excellence". Tweleve Universities have been identified under the scheme of "Centres for Excellence". The Commission has decided to launch a scheme to identify 100 colleges throughout the country as "Colleges with potential for excellence". Model curricula in core subjects have been circulated to all the Universities in the country with an advice to update their Curricula in a time bound manner. The premier research institutions like ICSSR are providing fellowships and other support to research in social sciences.

Recent initiatives taken to strengthen the technical education system include decision to introduce Credit-based system in the technical education, conversion of Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs) into the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), introduction of All India Enginerring Entrance Examination (AIEEE), launching of a fully dedicated technical education channel, launching of a special programme to improve quality of technical education, participation of private initiatives, development of technologies in emerging areas and their transfer to user agencies through technology development missions, transfer of techno-economic advances in technical education and apropriate technologies to rural people through expansion of Community Polytechnics and improving the productivity of the informal sector of the economy.

Change in present Education system

†2156. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that present education system has failed to develop prudent citizens;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.